

Everett Public Schools



Every Child A Winner



**A Parent's
Curriculum
Guide for
Middle School**

"Students need a balance of learning experiences - structured, intentional skill development, as well as spontaneous, creative learning opportunities."

*Terry Bergeson
Superintendent of Public Instruction*

The Magic of Middle School



Middle school students are explorers. They are exploring the world and their place in that world. They are learning about relationships, testing their limits and stretching their capabilities. At the same time, they are learning reading, math, science, art... and on top of all that, they have to change classrooms!

It's no wonder that middle schools are full of energy, and Everett Public Schools is committed to turning that energy into a productive educational experience for your child. We can best do that by working with you - the parents or guardians - to build on what your child knows and to set goals for her/his future. This Parent Curriculum Guide is intended to give you a broad overview of the learning goals for middle school students.

You may find that some of the descriptions of a middle school child do not match your child at this time. Your child may be performing above grade level in one subject and at or below in another. We want to emphasize that all children learn at different rates. The important thing is to focus on the needs of the child so that they can continuously improve.

"We must send a clear message that school is important, and we do that by investing our time and our attention."

*Richard Riley
Former U.S. Secretary of Education*

Your Middle School Student

A middle school child is:

- Physically restless - attentive one minute, losing interest the next
- Self-conscious - easily embarrassed if singled out
- Sometimes noisy, aggressive
- Inquisitive but may not readily ask questions of an adult
- Becoming increasingly interested in artistic, scientific, political, philosophical and social issues
- Developing a sense of independence, a sense of self, while strongly identifying with peers
- Questioning - may appear disordered and chaotic, but have patience, they're sorting it all out
- Increasingly capable of thinking in more abstract and complex ways

Middle schoolers are unpredictable, bouncing between childhood and adolescence. They are frustrating, energetic, complex young people undergoing great physical, emotional and intellectual changes. Although it may not always be obvious, they are bursting with creative energy. Help them find productive outlets for that creativity and you will find middle school to be one of your favorite times.



“Being average is not good enough. We are raising the academic bar and holding ourselves and our students accountable for the results.”

*Terry Bergeson
Superintendent of Public Instruction*

What Are Standards for Student Learning?

You probably have heard discussion of “standards” for learning. Standards are clear, consistent messages about what a child should know and be able to do. This is not a new concept; industry and sports have always had consistent standards, and effective teachers have always set clear goals for students. What is new is that now all of the school districts in Washington state have a consistent set of standards. They are based on four broad learning goals:

- Read with comprehension, write with skill and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and settings;
- Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical and life sciences; civics and history; geography; arts; and health and fitness;
- Think analytically, logically and creatively, and integrate experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgements and solve problems; and
- Understand the importance of work and how performance, effort and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities.

Based on these standards, the State has set specific learning expectations for grades 4, 7 and 10. In Everett, we have built our curriculum for all grades, kindergarten through grade 12, around these expectations.

The standards not only help students know what school is all about, they help teachers select materials, plan lessons and assess student learning. You will find more details about the standards in each area throughout this guide. There is also information later in this guide about State and district testing which you will want to review. Helping students prepare for testing is a critical role for parents.

You can get more information about the state standards at the website of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: www.k12.wa.us

Reading Standards

Sixth through Eighth Grade

Standard 1:

The student understands and uses different skills and strategies to read.

- Uses word meaning (origin, roots/affixes), context clues (explanations, elaborations, definitions, appositives, synonyms/antonyms) and pictures/graphics to comprehend text.
- Identifies and interprets specialized vocabulary critical to understanding content area information.

Standard 2:

The student understands the meaning of what is read.

- Uses pre-, during, and after - reading strategy tools to comprehend literary and informational text.
- Finds, sorts and analyzes information from multiple sources for a specific task.
- Summarizes, compares/contrasts, explains cause/effect and author's point of view by citing evidence from text.
- Analyzes and evaluates the validity of information and ideas in text.

Standard 3:

The student reads different materials for a variety of purposes.

- Evaluates appropriateness and selects a variety of resources for a specific task.
- Interprets documents such as blueprints, graphs, news articles and policies.

Standard 4:

The student sets goals and evaluates progress to improve reading.

- Applies strategies learned on own to improve reading achievement.
- Discusses books with others and explains reasons for recommendations.

Reading List

Dragon's Gate, Laurence Yep

Bridge to Terabithia, Katherine Paterson

The Cay, Theodore Taylor

The River, Gary Paulsen

The Watsons Go to Birmingham, Christopher Paul Curtis

Diary of Anne Frank, Anne Frank

Call of the Wild, Jack London

Catherine, Called Birdy, Karen Cushman

Eye Witness Series

Farewell to Manzanar, Jeanne Wakatsuki

Sing Down the Moon, Scott O'Dell

Journey to Jo'Burg, Beverly Naidoo

The Pearl, John Steinbeck

Red Scarf Girl, Ji-Li Jiang

On My Honor, Marion Dane



Julie of the Wolves, Jean Craighead George

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH, Robert O'Brien

Call it Courage, Armstrong Sperry

Dacey's Song, Cynthia Voigt

Lost in the Barrens, Farley Mowat

Writing Standards

Sixth through Eighth Grade

Standard 1:

The student writes clearly and effectively.

- Uses the Six-Trait Writing Model to guide his/her writing (see page 11).
- Writes an inviting introduction, a supportive middle and a thoughtful conclusion.

Standard 2:

The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.

- Uses different types of writing (e.g., essays, reports, letters, journals, etc.) for different audiences.
- Writes to express, inform, create, explain, persuade, entertain, reflect and complete forms.

Standard 3:

The student understands and uses the steps of the writing process

- Uses the steps of the writing process including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.
- Writes multiple drafts to reorganize and clarify ideas.

Standard 4:

The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of written work.

- Offers feedback to others based on writing criteria; accepts and uses feedback to revise his/her writing.

*We use this guide
to help students
understand
good writing.*

Six-Trait Writing Model

You can look at your writing in a lot of different ways. Known as the Six-Trait Model, here are six things to think about to help you become a better writer.

1) Ideas and content

- Is what I want to say clear?
- Did I give the reader enough information?

2) Organization

- Does my paper have a good beginning and ending?
- Have I told my ideas in the best order?

3) Voice

- Does this writing sound like me?
- Did I say what I really think and feel?

4) Word Choice

- Will my reader understand the words I used?
- Have I used words that paint a picture?

5) Sentence Fluency

- Do my sentences begin in different ways?
- Did I use different kinds of sentences?
- Is my paper easy to read out loud?

6) Writing Conventions

- Did I leave spaces between my words?
- Is my spelling correct?
- Did I use periods and question marks correctly?
- Did I use capital letters in the right places?

If you can answer all of these questions with a “YES!” then you have done a great job of writing!

Everett Four-Strand/Four-Level Writing Scoring Guide: Grades 6-12

<p>CONTENT is... <i>Writing to a narrow topic with relevant ideas so the meaning is clear.</i></p> <p>Level 4: Advanced</p> <p>A. <u>Topic</u> is purposefully focused on the theme/main idea/thesis/position throughout paper.</p> <p>B. <u>Main Ideas</u> indicate more than two full lines of reasoning.</p> <p>C. <u>Evidence</u> is elaborated with selected, relevant, and specific details, examples, anecdotes, reasons, and/or facts.</p> <p>D. <u>Commentary</u> provides cohesive explanations that thread credibility across parts of the evidence.</p> <p>E. <u>Message</u> shows insight, clarifies thought, goes beyond the obvious, answers questions, and/or draws upon personal experiences.</p> <p>Level 3: Proficient</p> <p>A. <u>Topic</u> is narrowly focused on the theme/main idea/thesis/position throughout paper.</p> <p>B. <u>Main Ideas</u> indicate two full lines of reasoning.</p> <p>C. <u>Evidence</u> is developed with relevant details, examples, anecdotes, reasons, and/or facts.</p> <p>D. <u>Commentary</u> provides credible explanations to clearly connect specific parts of the evidence.</p> <p>E. <u>Message</u> represents predictable or obvious thoughts.</p> <p>Level 2: Basic</p> <p>A. <u>Topic</u> is generally focused on the theme/main idea/thesis/position throughout paper.</p> <p>B. <u>Main Ideas</u> indicate at least one reason although it may not be complete.</p> <p>C. <u>Evidence</u> is general details or examples that may not be relevant; weak development is present.</p> <p>D. <u>Commentary</u> has inconsistent explanations that attempt to connect any cited the evidence.</p> <p>E. <u>Message</u> has unclear thoughts that may require interpretation to make sense.</p> <p>Level 1: Below Basic</p> <p>A. <u>Topic</u> wanders or the focus is lost about the theme/main idea/thesis/position throughout paper.</p> <p>B. <u>Main Ideas</u> are ill-defined statements not reflecting a main line of reasoning.</p> <p>C. <u>Evidence</u> is unconnected statements or lists, lacking in relevance, or interfering with meaning.</p> <p>D. <u>Commentary</u> is lacking and evidence goes unconnected.</p> <p>E. <u>Message</u> is missing or random thoughts that make no discernable point.</p>	<p>ORGANIZATION is... <i>Arranging events/ideas/reasons in order to provide a sense of completeness appropriate to a purpose in a logical pattern and using transitions for cohesion.</i></p> <p>Level 4: Advanced</p> <p>A. <u>Introduction</u> uniquely presents theme/main idea/thesis/position to draw reader in with strong sense of direction.</p> <p>B. <u>Middle</u> events/supporting ideas/reasons are purposefully arranged in a logical pattern that clearly fit together the theme/main idea/thesis/position.</p> <p>C. <u>Transitions</u> clearly provide (between/within-paragraph) cohesion that covers the bulk of the text or intentionally signals/implies an emphasis on relationship connections.</p> <p>D. <u>Conclusion</u> provides thought-provoking resolution, consequence, connection to broader context, or call for action.</p> <p>Level 3: Proficient</p> <p>A. <u>Introduction</u> presents the theme/main idea/thesis/position and provides reader with direction.</p> <p>B. <u>Middle</u> events/supporting ideas/reasons are prepared in a logical pattern to show the theme/main idea/thesis/position.</p> <p>C. <u>Transitions</u> show, signal, or maintain (between/within-paragraph) basic and sequencing connections.</p> <p>D. <u>Conclusion</u> ties up loose ends with consequence, connection to broader context, or call for action.</p> <p>Level 2: Basic</p> <p>A. <u>Introduction</u> restates the title or prompt, is unclear, or provides reader with only a little sense of direction.</p> <p>B. <u>Middle</u> events/supporting ideas/reasons are loosely patterned to outline the theme/main idea /thesis /position.</p> <p>C. <u>Transitions</u> are telling/sequencing connections (between/within-paragraph).</p> <p>D. <u>Conclusion</u> is limited to summarizing but without purpose.</p> <p>Level 1: Below Basic</p> <p>A. <u>Introduction</u> is missing and needed for meaning, leaving reader with no direction.</p> <p>B. <u>Middle</u> events/supporting ideas/reasons are randomly or illogically ordered and do not shape the theme/main idea/thesis/position.</p> <p>C. <u>Transitions</u> are incorrectly used, omitted, or repetitive in use (between/within-paragraph).</p> <p>D. <u>Conclusion</u> restates introduction or the text abruptly ends.</p>
<p>STYLE is... <i>Writing fluently with well-chosen words while using an engaging voice (narrative writing is honest/personal and persuasion/expository writing shows commitment).</i></p> <p>Level 4: Advanced</p> <p>A. <u>Sentences</u> vary widely in beginnings, length, and/or structure; flow easily/have cadence; and invite reading aloud.</p> <p>B. <u>Word Choice</u> is vivid, precise, or makes writing memorable; is natural and never overdone; uses various active verbs.</p> <p>C. <u>Voice</u> is engaging, confident, shows commitment, and/or takes a risk; tone hooks reader (strong reader-writer interaction) and audience/purpose is strongly addressed.</p> <p>Level 3: Proficient</p> <p>A. <u>Sentences</u> vary in beginnings, length, and/or structure; usually flow smoothly; and are easily read aloud.</p> <p>B. <u>Word Choice</u> is specific and persuasive/compelling; strengthens writing, and shows use of active verbs.</p> <p>C. <u>Voice</u> shows tone of commitment to hook the reader (reader-writer interaction evident) and audience/purpose is addressed.</p> <p>Level 2: Basic</p> <p>A. <u>Sentences</u> vary some in beginnings, length, and/or structure; may be awkward; and/or troublesome to read aloud.</p> <p>B. <u>Word Choice</u> is limited, does not enhance writing, may show thesaurus overload, and/or mostly uses passive verbs.</p> <p>C. <u>Voice</u> shows distracted commitment; tone is inconsistent (reader yet to be "invited in") about audience/purpose.</p> <p>Level 1: Below Basic</p> <p>A. <u>Sentences</u> are similar in beginnings, length, and/or structure; no/minimal "sentence sense"; or does not invite reading aloud.</p> <p>B. <u>Word Choice</u> shows redundancy, is incorrect/has omissions, or confuses and weakens the writing.</p> <p>C. <u>Voice</u> is lacking or limited due to inadequate commitment; tone is that of boredom (reader is "turned away") and audience/purpose is not addressed.</p>	<p>CONVENTIONS is... <i>Using rules of standard English for usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphs to make the meaning of the text clear.</i></p> <p>Level 4: Advanced According to 6-12 grade-level expectations, Accurately applies conventions, although may intentionally break rules for style purposes.</p> <p>Level 3: Proficient According to 6-12 grade-level expectations, Consistently and accurately applies conventions.</p> <p>Level 2: Basic According to 3-5 grade-level expectations, Consistently applies conventions that do not interfere with meaning.</p> <p>Level 1: Below Basic According to 3-5 grade-level expectations, Inconsistently applies conventions that interfere with meaning.</p>

Note: Underlined words are labels that signal a separate indicator for each strand. Each indicator is of comparable worth per strand. Some indicators have multiple parts separated by "and," "or," or "and/or." When scoring use these conjunctions to signal the emphasis that is to be placed on a part, i.e., all parts must all be present verses some parts can be present. **Bolded words** are keys words used in distinguishing one level from the next.

Draft 19 (Rev. 6-22-05)

District Writing Assessment

Sixth and eighth grade students take the district writing assessment each year. They are given a topic and asked to write about it. The papers are scored on a 5-point scale using the six-trait model described earlier in this guide.

Middle school teachers emphasize quality writing throughout the curriculum, not just in language arts. Students will need to reach standard in writing in high school in order to graduate.

1 Dear Mom and Dad,
2 The sky is a mysterious gray, and you can
3 feel the hot raindrops trickle down your face like
4 lava flowing out of a volcano. Who could think
5 that such a horrible thing could happen? Every
6 one in the Puget Sound has had weeks of warn-
7 ing for this earthquake, however, it still surp-
8 rized us. I am standing outside wondering where
9 to go, what to do. All I want is for this horrible
10 nightmare to be over, yet I know it will just
11 return tomorrow when we have to go back and
12 retrieve our most important possessions. I
13 have never really thought about my most im-
14 portant possessions. Although now that I have
15 to, I find myself not sure of what is so im-
16 portant to me that I can't live without it.
17 After thinking long and hard about what
18 we, as a family, should go obtain out of our
19 earthquake shattered house, I have decided that
20 we should all get something of our own. With
21 a limited number of items we can carry, the
22 items must be small and light weight. Food is
23 an essential item that you absolutely can't
24 live without. Another possession we should retri-
25 eve is a photoalbum, or one of our favorite pic-
26 tures because that way we can look at all
27 the good times we had. Even though right now

28 life might be throwing difficult obstacles at
29 us, we can get through it together. Those pictur-
30 es will help us do just that. Do you remember
31 when you were a small child how your tiny
32 stuffed animal or blanket could make every-
33 thing all better? Well Britney's soft, cuddly stuf-
34 fed dog is everything to her. When Britany is
35 with her little stuffed dog, she feels safe. No
36 matter what horrible things are going on in
37 our lives, her puppy dog saves her from it.
38 This earthquake may have destroyed our
39 beautiful home and nicely landscaped yard,
40 but it will never destroy our family. With
41 these few and precious things, our family
42 can start our lives over again and live hap-
43 pily ever after.
44 Your Daughter,

Communication Standards

Sixth through Eighth Grade

Standard 1:

The student uses listening and observation skills to gain understanding.

- Gives evidence of attention by nodding, maintaining eye contact or taking notes.
- Checks his/her understanding by asking questions and paraphrasing.
- Listens for, identifies and explains important details.
- Questions, analyzes and evaluates information.

Standard 2:

The student communicates ideas clearly and effectively.

- Communicates for a range of purposes: to inform, persuade or entertain.
- Adjusts content and presentation skills to the needs of the audience.

Standard 3:

The student uses communication strategies to work effectively with others.

- Contributes responsibly to group efforts and works cooperatively.
- Demonstrates respect by acknowledging viewpoints and ideas of others.

Standard 4:

The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of presentations.

- Offers feedback on content and organization of presentations; seeks, accepts and uses feedback to revise his/her presentation.

“Tests are no longer just a paper and pencil exercise. As part of our new performance assessment system, they require students to apply their knowledge, skills, and creativity to solve problems.”

*Terry Bergeson
Superintendent of Public Instruction*

Assessments of Student Learning

In addition to the tests prepared by their teachers, middle school students take several district and state tests to assess their progress.

Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

The WASL is a standardized test which combines multiple choice and open-ended questions. It is taken by all seventh graders in Washington state in April. The test measures student achievement of the standards set for grade 7 in reading, writing, math, listening and science. Parents receive a report of their child's scores in the fall.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)

The ITBS is a standardized multiple choice test given in March to all sixth grade students in Washington state. ITBS measures basic skills in reading, math, language, science, social studies and study skills. The scores tell us how well our students do compared with students nationwide. Each family receives a report of their student's scores in the late spring.



How You Can Help

What you can do to help

- Encourage daily reading and sharing of fiction and nonfiction, e.g., newspapers, magazines, classic literature, current science articles.
- Make sure your child has a book for silent reading both at school and at home, every day.
- Ask your child to summarize or tell you about what they have read.
- Set aside a specific quiet place and time for your child to study each day.
- Study time should be used for homework assignments, review of previous work, silent reading or studying math facts.
- Monitor your child's assignment sheet or school planner on a daily basis.
- Help your child keep his/her notebook organized. All papers should be organized by subject and should be secured in a 3-ring binder. Keep your child supplied with necessary materials such as pencils, pens and notebook paper.
- Review returned assignments with your child.
- Be involved in your child's homework. Check it over and make sure they show all their work and can explain it to you.
- Practice basic math facts with your child to increase speed and accuracy.
- Practice estimating discounts, sale prices and totals when shopping with your child.
- Brainstorm several solutions when problems arise.
- Play board and card games with your child to develop mathematical strategies and computation skills.
- Involve your child in measurement activities such as cooking, calculating the amount of paint needed to paint a room, measuring with a ruler, reading mileage on a map, calculating miles per gallon, and using both metric and U.S. units of measure.
- Visit science exhibits, aquariums, parks and zoos, plays, concerts, historical sites, museums, galleries, local exhibits, art classes, public libraries, etc.
- Watch and discuss educational television programs together.
- Use and discuss maps and the world atlas with your child.
- Assist your child in using a computer as a tool for learning.
- Encourage your child to ask questions.
- Praise your child often.

"I passionately believe that our standards are both achievable and vitally necessary to the future success of every child in Washington state."

Former Governor Gary Locke

Middle School Does Count!

Moving from Middle School to High School

"Central to our mission as middle schools are two items - to assist students in reaching high learning expectations and to guide students as they explore their individual strengths. Middle school provides the structure for this critical work and sets the foundation for success in high school. Middle schools need parents to work side-by-side with educators to reinforce healthy work habits, establish high goals, and value academic success."

*David Jones, Principal
Eisenhower Middle School*

"The habits you sharpen in middle school will be tools you will use to succeed in high school. Use every single opportunity you are given to read, write, present, and calculate, because these are absolute high school requirements. Develop these patterns to all of your work, apply yourself and finish all assignments. Middle school athletics and music instruction are also building blocks

for participation and competition at the high school level."

*Pat Sullivan, Principal
Everett High School*

"Everett Public Schools has made some important steps in coordinating and aligning the curriculum K-12. High school and middle school staff realize the interrelatedness of their missions and appreciate the importance of the development of student skill at each level. Middle schools must help their students through the most challenging developmental phase while helping them gain the skills necessary for high school."

*Debbie Cossey, Counselor
Jackson High School*

Please note: Middle school students can get high school credit for taking Pre-Algebra or Algebra if they earn a grade of C or better.

Middle School Competency Project

Everett Middle Schools are doing a good job of preparing students, but our community's expectations of what every student needs to know and be able to do are changing. In 1999, Everett Public Schools launched an initiative to improve our middle school programs and address these new expectations.

A Middle School Task Force was formed in January 2000 and consisted of about 60 parents, teachers, administrators and community members from all five middle schools as well as from some elementary and high schools. This task force met throughout the school year and laid the foundation of what is now called the *Middle School Competency Project*. They concluded that in order for middle school students to achieve meaningful and enduring learning, they must be able to:

- direct their own learning;
- integrate and apply content knowledge, skills and strategies;
- solve problems effectively; and
- communicate their knowledge.

These four areas have evolved into the four competencies all middle school students are expected to achieve:

- Self-Directed Learner
- Effective User of Skills and Strategies
- Effective Problem Solver
- Effective Communicator

The Middle School Competency Project is being implemented over three years, beginning in the fall of 2002. The first year focused on establishing the processes for successful portfolio *collection*, student *reflection* and the *sharing* of their learning during student-led conferences. The second year will emphasize the indicators of quality performance for each competency. The third year will include an end-of-8th-grade final activity where students provide evidence of being competent in all four areas.

Competencies that guide the student as s/he uses skills and knowledge to collect evidence demonstrating their proficiency in being an/a:

Self-Directed Learner - The student takes responsibility for his/her behavior and learning. As an individual, the student strives for excellence, evaluates work against an identified standard, takes initiative with tasks and problems, perseveres and respects the feelings and property of others. When working with others, the student interacts and collaborates in a cooperative manner, helps resolve conflicts, depends on team members and accepts responsibility for fulfilling individual obligations while holding all group members accountable.

Effective User of Skills and Strategies - The student acquires the skills and strategies for improving academic literacy across all content areas. When working with text, students are able to make sense of the content. When working with quantitative information, students are able to interpret and create representations. When working with various media forms, students are able to make inferences about meaning.

Effective Problem Solver - When discovering the unknown or challenging assumptions, the student defines the problem, gathers relevant information, chooses a strategy, develops a plan, implements the plan and evaluates the effectiveness of the solution. To answer a question or learn something new, the student defines the task and identifies possible information sources, selecting the most useful to address the task. The student then locates the sources and selects the most relevant information, synthesizes the information and uses it to complete the task. Finally, the student evaluates the process used to acquire information.

Effective Communicator - The student communicates information, ideas and concepts to various audiences for different purposes. The student uses a variety of forms and methods to communicate including, but not limited to, reading, writing, listening, speaking, technology, visual representations and non-verbal expression. The student evaluates the final product or performance as well as the effectiveness of the process.